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ABSTRACT

This paper emphasizes the connections between listening and the language arts. It lists advantages of students who are good listeners, such as students can learn more when listening well, and students learn to be polite by listening. In addition, the paper lists the following conditions which improve student listening: teaching and learning situations which emphasize individual learning styles; a school environment which stresses a caring set of interactions between learners and teachers; and parental involvement with mutually accepted listening goals. It outlines how students can be taught to be good listeners, and suggests that students who are good listeners should be observed and imitated. Additional suggestions include the following: special class sessions devoted to guiding students to become better listeners; keep the learning environment free of unnecessary noises; and teachers modeling examples of good listeners. The paper provides a list of possible evaluations of students' listening improvements. Examples of such evaluations are: self-evaluation by students; observing students in various situations, such as in class discussions and lunchroom and recess conversations; and student portfolios. (Contains 12 references.) (PM)

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Listening and the Language Arts.

by Marlow Ediger

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LISTENING AND THE LANGUAGE ARTS

There are a plethora of reasons why pupils should become good listeners. These reasons include the following:

1. politeness is involved when listening carefully to the thinking of others.
2. much can be learned from others through careful listening.
3. learning can become increasingly sequential with the involvement of good listening habits.
4. embarrassment results when one is asked to respond but has not listened carefully to the identified question.
5. active participation is not possible in a discussion when a person's listening has been inadequate.
6. time is wasted when directions have not been followed carefully and the inaccurate product/process has to be done over.
7. inadequate oral communication is in evidence with poor quality listening between and among individuals.
8. listening needs to be stressed across the curriculum in order that a pupil may become a good listener.
9. quality listening habits result when pupils integrate school and society. Thus, good listening in school is not separated from quality listening in the societal arena.
10. improved human relations result when people listen politely to each other (Ediger, 1971, 14, 82).

The Psychology of Learning and Listening

There are selected guidelines from the psychology of learning which are truly applicable to improving listening skills on the part of pupils. These guidelines include the following:

1. improved listening occurs when content for pupils captures their attention.
2. improved listening occurs when pupils attach meaning to what is being learned.
3. improved listening occurs when pupils perceive purposes or reasons for learning selected content.
4. improved listening accrues when pupils' individual learning styles are in emphasis in teaching and learning situations.
5. improved listening occurs through accepted reasons for review and practice.
6. improved listening occurs when a school environment stresses a caring/nurturing set of interactions among learners

and teachers (Ediger, 1986, 15- 19).

7. improved listening occurs when there are classroom standards developed by pupils with teacher assistance as reference points for pupil behavior.

8. improved listening occurs when individual differences among pupils are considered in teaching and learning situations. Thus, differences in learning styles need implementation to guide more optimal pupil achievement in listening (See Searson and Dunn, 2001).

9. improved listening occurs when pupils have choices as to how they are to evaluated in terms of achievement (Gardner, 1993).

10. improved listening occurs when mutually accepted goals in listening are in evidence with parental involvement and assistance.

The psychology of learning is highly important to consider in guiding optimal learner achievement when listening across the curriculum is being emphasized. Following the tenets of educational psychology in teaching is a motivator for pupils to achieve and learn.

Philosophy of Education in the Listening Curriculum

The philosophy of education needs adequate consideration when developing the listening across the curriculum concept. First, Measurement driven instruction (MDI) emphasizes the importance of establishing predetermined objectives for pupils to achieve. There is no input from learners here. Teachers and the state department of education might then have selected objectives for pupil achievement, prior to instruction. With MDi, the objectives are highly precise. It can then be measured if a pupil has/has not achieved an objective after instruction. Either the pupil has/has not attained the stated objective. If an objective has not been achieved by a pupil, a different teaching strategy then needs to be in evidence. The objectives should be arranged in a sequential manner so that a previously attained objective assists the learner to achieve the ensuing end. Thayer (1970) wrote the following:

The early years of the twentieth century were conspicuous in their applications of science to all phases of business and industry. It was applied not merely to the invention of new products and processes but to the details of organization and management designed to promote economy and efficiency. Experts trained in "scientific management" studied carefully the

performance of workers on the job with results so fruitful in economy and efficiency that many came to be seen in "job analysis" possibilities of application not only to vocational education but also the reform of other aspects of education as well. All that was need, it seemed, was to identify the scientific outcomes by insuring that pupils engage in the activities to eventuate the proper habits and skills, information, attitudes, ideals, and the like.

To become a good listener, the researcher determines specific sequential steps involved in pupils becoming those who listen well, and describe these behaviors in measurable terms. With continuous research and study, good listeners can be identified and their ways analyzed what it is, which was done, to be able to listen effectively. Designing a related curriculum which incurs quality listening is then an end goal.

Second, a problem solving philosophy may be implemented. Here, pupils with teacher guidance identify a problem contextually in the curriculum. The problem needs to be clearly stated so that it can be solved. Information in its solution needs to be gathered by pupils. An hypothesis should result which is tentative. By gathering more information, the hypothesis is evaluated in a practical situation. The hypothesis may then be accepted as is or may be modified if necessary. MDI is not possible in problem solving since each of the flexible involved steps are subjective to those involved in arriving at solutions. There are no predetermined objectives in problem solving since pupils are involved in choosing the problem, gathering related information, and evaluating the hypothesis. New problems may arise at any point during the problem solving process. Problem solving emphasizes group and committee endeavors. In society, collective decisions are made in a democracy; thus in the school setting, pupils should also work in groups to identify and solve problems (Ediger,1977, 269- 270).

A third philosophy of education stresses humanism. Humanists strongly believe the individual with teacher assistance should be heavily involved in decision making as to what to learn. Choices need to be made and the pupil is the chooser. The teacher motivates, encourages, and guides pupils to stay on task. Objectives, within flexible bounds, then come from the pupil and are subjective to the learner. Self evaluation is important here including portfolio development and use. The teacher here is one who helps pupils to achieve, grow, and learn (See Stumpf, 1971).

Learning Opportunities to Achieve Objectives

There are a plethora of good learning opportunities for pupils to achieve objectives. These learning opportunities need to be provided in manner which involves using the best of research findings and educational thought. What might the teacher do to guide optimal listening among pupils? First, the teacher needs to evaluate the self to ascertain if selected facts, concepts, and generalizations are repeated too frequently, resulting in pupils coming to depend on repetition if they fail to secure these ideas the first time. Rather, in a discussion, for example, the teacher through observation can ascertain what pupils know, what they have left to learn, and where they might find the needed information. To be sure, there needs to be adequate opportunities for pupils to review what has been learned so that forgetting does not occur. But repetition should be cut down in amount so that each pupil becomes a better listener. If a pupil did not "get it," due to faulty listening, the teacher may ask another pupil what had just been said. As university supervisor of student teachers, the author noticed that pupils tend to not listen carefully enough to oral directions given by the teacher, resulting in a product/process done incorrectly. The directions need to be given clearly and concisely. Too avoid repeating directions excessively, the teacher may need to write them on the chalkboard for pupil reference purposes.

As a second learning opportunity to foster quality listening, time spent on developing cooperatively, with pupils, standards for good behavior in the classroom is time well spent. Here, pupils learn about quality behavior standards and why these are salient. Evaluation in terms of these standards is a must! The teacher may then notice which standards are violated and help pupils to understand how to overcome these weaknesses. Diagnosis and remediation are important.

Third, special class sessions may be devoted in guiding pupils to become improved listeners. Tape recording of different sounds might be listened to so that pupils may determine the cause(s) of each sound or noise. Or, pupils may put their heads face down, securely, upon the desk top. The teacher then makes individual sounds for learners to guess their sources. These kinds of activities might be perceived as a game approach in teaching and learning situations.

Fourth, a good learning environment needs to minimize/eliminate unnecessary noises. Too be sure, a busy

classroom will have some noise which indicates that pupils are at work and achieving to attain objectives. Certainly, pupils with teacher guidance are aware of unnecessary distractions which occur in the classroom. These need identification and elimination. Continuous heed must be given to these kinds of irritations. Pupils should not be exposed to concentrate on the unnecessary (Ediger, 1993, 368- 371).

Fifth, the physical conditions in the classroom need assessment to notice if weaknesses here may be downgraded. Excessively high temperature readings can make pupils drowsy and results in poor listening. Conversely, low temperature readings may make for pupils concentrating excessively on the discomfort in the classroom rather than listening to the discussion. Equally important to proper temperature readings in the classroom is appropriate ventilation.

Sixth, a variety of learning activities need to be provided for pupil engagement. Using printed materials, AV aids, excursions, construction experiences, and dramatizations, among many others, as developmentally appropriate experiences, may well avoid boredom situations among learners. Activities may be changed by the teacher, when observing pupils in class, to develop and maintain careful listening and interest in learning (Ediger, 1987, 9- 11).

Seventh, the teacher needs to present a good example for pupils in the area of listening. He/she listens carefully to pupils comments, questions, and goals. The teacher must show interest in each pupil and not shun individuals. Each pupil regardless of income level, interests possessed, physical appearance, and abilities has tremendous intrinsic worth as a human being. Pupils individually need to be assisted to achieve as much as possible. Thus, pupil esteem needs must be met so that a positive self concept emerges.

Eighth, pupils need to experience learning opportunities possessing purpose for listening carefully. Thus, the teacher may briefly explain reasons for listening carefully to an ongoing lesson presentation. Quality listening is salient across the curriculum (Ediger, 1980, 38- 41).

Ninth, each learner needs to receive praise for good listening. Receiving honest praise, periodically, should encourage better pupil listening.

Tenth, pupils should be seated in a place whereby optimal listening is possible. Thus, pupils with hearing impairment need to be seated as close to the spoken voice as possible.

Assessing Listening Achievement

Numerous quality approaches may be used to assess pupil achievement in listening. Procedures used need to be valid and reliable. The teacher may write dated diary entries on pupils' achievement in listening. When viewing each pupil's diary entries, a trend may be noticed in how well a pupil is doing in the area of listening. Analysis of the entries might well indicate what needs exist for helping pupils individually to improve listening skills. Second, the teacher may do journal writing to obtain an overall observation of how well pupils are achieving sequentially in listening. This helps the teacher to recall how well each pupil is achieving in listening when content in journal writing is reviewed. Third, self evaluation by the pupil, in terms of standards, may be stressed to ascertain how well the learner feels he/she is achieving in listening. These self evaluation procedures may be used each six weeks of schooling. Fourth, an informal listening test may be given to pupils. Here, the teacher clearly reads aloud a short story to pupils. Then questions are raised by the teacher covering the subject matter read. If the whole class is involved in the discussion, then the teacher needs to make judgments pertaining to how well individual pupils listened. Should pupils respond on paper to these questions, then a better indication of how well each person listened can be ascertained. However, there are pupils who have difficulty in putting ideas down on paper and this needs to be considered.

There are certainly numerous situations in which the teacher may assess pupils informally in listening across the curriculum. These include the following situations for listening within the framework of oral communication experiences:

1. discussions and committee work.
2. directions followed in doing a product or process.
3. conversations in the lunchroom and at recess time.
4. peer teaching and peer collaboration endeavors.
5. project methods of teaching and activity means of instruction.

Fifth, portfolios may be developed by pupils individually with teacher guidance. The portfolio may contain the following suggested items as examples, among others:

a) graded answers to questions on listening to stories on cassettes.

b) a video tape pertaining to the pupil interacting with others in developing a project in which listening is inherent.

c) self assessment of listening quality experienced within a group or committee. Definite criteria are used in the self evaluation instrument.

Continuous evaluation by the pupil and by the teacher pertaining to the former's achievement in listening is important. Carefully developed standards need to be used in the assessment. The pupil needs to change from what is presently in listening achievement to a selected achievable ideal (Ediger, 2000, Chapter Fifteen). Parental involvement is very important in assisting their offspring to achieve more optimally. In an article on "An education evening out," Corso, Funk, and Gaffney wrote the following:

We wanted to provide parents with ways they could support their children on the path to literacy. As the first literacy evening was being perceived, surveys were being sent out asking families if they would be interested in learning more about helping children learn to read. The parents were also asked what time and day of the week they would prefer a literacy night. The response was tremendous...

The above movement started the ball rolling in involving parents to assist their offspring to achieve more optimally in reading. Good listening is very salient and inherent in helping pupils improve in listening.

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